

**ACT export awards launched - literally**

Asia Africa Intelligence Wire

ACT exporters have never experienced such smooth sailing as they did early yesterday morning on Lake Burley Griffith as the first rays of sunlight touched the glassy surface.

More than 80 exporters and their supporters cruised around the lake while the 2006 ACT Chief Minister's export awards were launched by political and business leaders.

Award winners will be announced in September.

Managing director of Lerida Estate, Anne Caine, had no smooth ride into the stormy export industry when the Lake George winery and award-winning exporter looked to grow its business.

Europe loomed as a glamorous destination but the market was too crowded so the outstanding pinot noir producers set a course for South-East Asia where they cracked new markets in Taiwan and Bangladesh.

Lerida Estate, which began in 1998 and harvested its first vintage in 2002, won last year's agri business category of the export awards.

Entering the awards gave the estate a fresh look into its business and strategy and aiming for export made it focus on quality.

Winning the award opened doors for the business in China and helped gain a place on the industry's tasting tables in Canada.

Deputy Chief Minister Katy Gallagher launched the 2006 awards and said last year the ACT contributed \$763 million to Australia's export tally. A strong export culture existed in the local small business community. Among ACT success stories were: Australian National University spin-off company **Seeing Machines** was the first Canberra company to list on the London Stock Exchange and now exported to Europe, Asia and the US.

ACT industrial design company the Dream Farm secured a lucrative international contract following a successful Business ACT-led trade mission to Britain and Ireland in October 2005; and Soltek, which began operation just over three years ago, penetrated the export markets of Japan and Europe with two innovative products that had revolutionised the surfing industry.

Ms Gallagher said the Government and Hindmarsh Group were in partnership in an office in Shanghai, and the Government and CEA Technologies had an industry office in Washington, where four ACT companies now had permanent bases. ACT Exporters Network president Michael Cliff, a coach and mentor for fellow exporters, said the awards were not only about winning, they helped businesses learn about their own operations and where they were positioned in the world of export.

He said the exporters network was in its third year and had 75 members.